

643 country As in all modern Governments, they are always
 645 changing, and their efforts are nullified by their successors. Nevertheless, since government is extremely centralised, their signatures are needed for the merest details, which accounts for a great deal of delay. As they know the state of affairs only from official reports, their decisions in matters concerning the fellaheen are often either unsuitable or inopportune.

647 The authorities whose business it is to apply these de-
 692 cisions are legion. The transmission and execution of laws, orders, decrees, bye-laws and the like is carried out by an army of officials 200,000 strong, who for so doing absorb a third of the revenue of the State, a sum almost equal to what is furnished by the labours of the fellaheen.

647 This is no chance comparison of the author's. 'The
 511 long continuance of the bureaucratic system,' said Makram
 661 Ebeid Pasha, Minister of Finance, in presenting the budget for 1936 to Parliament, 'has been the chief cause of the lasting poverty of the fellah, in spite of the progress and prosperity of the country.' He proposed, in his own words, to 'put an end to this shameful state of affairs, which has turned the people into mere servants of a government machine which was intended to serve them.'

647 The overpowering weight of this machine is concentrat-
 ed, for the fellah, in the hands of his *mudir*, his *maamur* and his *omda*. Let us examine the scope and function of these different officials.

635 Politically, Egypt is divided into 23 sections. There are five urban areas, called governorates (*mohafazat*). These are: Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, Suez and the Canal Area. There are four frontier-districts: the Red Sea, Sinai, the Western Desert (including the Oases of Siwa, Bahariya and Farafra) and the Southern Desert (including the Oases of Dakhla and Kharga). Last, but not least, there are 14 agricultural provinces, called *mudiriya*s, which cover the rest of the country.

Six of these—Beheira, Gharbiya, Dakahliya, Sharqiya, Menoufiya and Qalioubiya—each with 300,000 to 900,000 inhabitants, spread like a fan over the Delta. These six, whose names date from the Arab Period, are the most populous and best irrigated.

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343 in bigger villages the house of a notable or a successful merchant.

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Within easy reach of the village on the side facing the fields are the *shoonas* or depôts for storing crops, together with offices and officials' houses, and the *ilzamiya* or compulsory school.

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Now let us go inside the village. In a clean and accessible corner, better cared for than all the other houses, there may be sometimes a "rest-house" or *madyafa* of two or three rooms, kept by the *omda* for the use of Government officials and travellers. This building belongs either to the Irrigation Department or to the Ministry of the Interior. There are Government rest-houses in about 400 villages.

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Let us penetrate to the heart of the little town. What we have seen up to now has given us no idea of what to expect. All is dust and disorder. There is no plan or system, and not a single straight line. The only thing in common with a modern city is the congestion due to lack of building space. The alleys, strewn with dung and rubbish, are so narrow that three people cannot walk abreast; they are less than two yards wide. There is no hope of driving through, and hardly of riding through on donkey-back. However, in some places where there is more movement, the buildings are of necessity less crowded, as in front of the *omda's* house or the school, and in the business quarter, which contains the little open shops of the tailor, the grocer, the potter, and the weaver, and, if the village is large enough, a café. There are many villages without a single shop, so that it is impossible to buy anything at all, except from an occasional pedlar. In some villages the system of barter is still in use, corn, for example, being exchanged for salt.

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No main road ever goes through a village as in England or France. The hamlet is a compact mass of buildings, standing aside from the road, canal or river; wheeled vehicles cannot enter it. That is why so few foreigners, missionaries and, indeed, well-to-do Egyptians except the *'omda* and the *sarraf*, know anything of its inner life. To get a picture of this, we must first describe the leading characters.

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We have already met the *'omda* and the *sarraf*, who link the fellah to the Government, and the *nazir*, his link with the landowner. Another connection with the civilised world is provided by the *baqqal*, often a Greek, who performs the

At Work on the Excavations

a) General.

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1. The overseers, who are appointed by the Administration of Antiquities for every field of excavation, are often mere custodians from the museum, or something similar, but in their new position they often like to play the gentleman in their dress.

So this one has put on a *ṭarbūsh*, the red cap with a dark blue tassel, more familiar to us by the name of *fez*.

He sits on an elevation, in order to gain a better oversight, and to be out of the dust.

Da-l-efendi 'a'id 'ala-l-'elwe
biṭ-ṭarbūš wer-ra'abe-l-ḥelwe.

See, the efendi sits upon the height,
With the *ṭarbūsh* and the sweet neck.

1. Efendi is properly the term of address for Turks (it is the Greek *αἰθέρης*), now commonly used for officials and all other men of some rank.

2. The word "sweet" is used by the peasant about as frequently as it is by our school-girls. For comparison one should recall the sun-burned, callous neck of a genuine peasant (Vollers).